

Ms. Deepika Tiwari

Assistant Professor

Patna Women's College

Email ID – dtdeepikatiwari@gmail.com

B.A I, (semester 2)

CC204, Unit – I

Paper Name – Introduction to 14th to 17th Century Literature

Table of Contents:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Historical Background
- 3.0 Characteristics of the Age
 - 3.1 Major Dramatists of Jacobean Age
- 4.0 Major Prose Writers of Jacobean Age
 - 4.1 Francis Bacon
 - 4.2 Advancement of Learning
 - 4.3 Novum Organum Scientiarum
- 5.0 Important Quotes of Bacon
- 6.0 Poetry in Jacobean Age
 - 6.1 Metaphysical Poetry
 - 6.2 Major Metaphysical Poets
 - 6.3 Common features of metaphysical poetry

Jacobean Age (1603 – 1625)

1.0 Introduction:

Jacobean so called from Latin word 'Jacobus' which means James and thus belonging to the reign of James I (1603 – 25). A period which like the Elizabethan age, was particularly rich in literary activity. The king himself published four books: two on poetry, a work on demonology and the famous *A Counterblast to Tobacco* (1604). Among dramatists, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Webster, Tourneur, Ford, Middleton and Rowley were all very active. Donne and Drayton were two of the most famous of the lyric poets of the period. Bacon and Robert Burton were best known prose writers. In 1611 was published Kings Authorized version of Bible.

2.0 Historical Background:

- James I of England and VI of Scotland ascended the throne of England after the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603. Queen Elizabeth died childless that's why her cousin from Scotland was called to be the king of England.
- King James was a Protestant married to a Catholic Queen.
- Divine Rights of King's Proclaimed in 1604, according to it Kings were the representative of God and thus answerable to him alone.
- Forty-Seven translators were appointed to write Authorized Version of Bible in 1611.
- A series of plots were engineered to depose him. The most famous of these plots were; The Gunpowder Plot. In November 1605, a group of Roman Catholics planned to blow up the English house of Parliament at its opening by the king. To create a Roman Catholic rising in the Midland and secure a toleration for Catholics. One of the conspirators Francis Tresham betrayed. Guy Fawkes, the leader was discovered ready to fire and was executed along with eight other conspirators.

3.0 Characteristic of the Age:

In a sense the Jacobean age was an age of great flowering of literature and in other sense it was an age of decadence. It was rich because many great writers who were born and nurtured in Elizabethan age produced some of their masterpieces in this age. Like – Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, John Donne, Francis Bacon, George Chapman, John Marston, Thomas Dekker, Francis Beaumont, John Fletcher, Thomas Heywood, John Webster, Cyril Turner, Thomas Middleton, Phillip Massinger, John Ford, James Shirley etc are only few to name among them. But if we enter into the heart of the matter, we shall see that among them most were born and nurtured in the Elizabethan age but wrote and published their works in the Jacobean age. In fact, the number of truly Jacobean writers were only a few and can be counted on the finger. Therefore, the writers born after 1570/75 or beyond were truly Jacobean for their art flowered in the Jacobean age.

3.1 Dramatist of Jacobean Age:

1. Ben Jonson (1572-1637)
2. Francis Beaumont (1584-1616)
3. John Fletcher (1579-1625)
4. John Webster (1580-1625)
5. Philip Massinger (1584-1639)
6. John Ford (1586-1639)
7. James Shirley (1596-1666)
8. George Herbert (1593-1633)

4.0 Major Prose Writer of Jacobean Age:

4.1 Francis Bacon –

Lord Chancellor, politician, and philosopher, the fifth son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, lord keeper to Elizabeth I (1558-79). Bacon studied at Cambridge from 1573 – 1575. A year later, Bacon's father died, leaving him impoverished and penniless. Bacon went to Gray's Inn and devote himself to studying law. In the meanwhile, he also landed a job as a member for Cornwall in House of Commons because of which he could easily complete his education. He was also called at Bar in 1582. Two years later, Bacon composed his first political memorandum *A letter of Advice to Queen Elizabeth*, which earned him instant attention.

Bacon's political career flourished under the reign of King James I. He was knighted in 1603 and further went on to receive a number of appointments, including Solicitor General, Attorney General, Lord Chancellor and his father's old position, Lord Keeper of Great Seal. He also became a member of Privy council and received two titles, Baron Verulam and Viscount St Albans.

His political career came to an abrupt end when he was impeached for taking bribes. Spent four days in Prison at the Tower of London. Because of this he lost position at the court. He devoted the remaining years of his life writing.

His major work includes:

4.2 *Advancement of Learning (1650)* - he dedicated to King James I, This work consisted of two books. In the first book, Bacon provides a survey and classification of all kinds of knowledge. Before Bacon, learning largely meant memorising the classics, especially Aristotle and following every diktat of established religion. However, Bacon tried to introduce a new system of learning based on observation, and reason. In *Advancement of Learning*, he argues that the only knowledge of importance was that which could be discovered by

observation. Bacon makes a distinction between ‘theological truth’, drawn from oracles or scriptures and ‘scientific truth’ drawn from reason.

4.3 *Novum Organum Scientiarum* – or *The New Instrument* was written in Latin and published in 1620. The book was intended as a successor to Aristotle’s works on Logic. Bacon wanted to replace, what he believed to be Aristotle’s universal truths with the idea that truth had to be discovered. The book was a part of a much larger incomplete philosophical enterprise that Bacon had titled *Instauratio Magna* (or *The Great Instauration*). It was a great philosophical plan of Bacon to change and reform the way, in which man investigates nature. It argued in favour of knowledge based on experience or practice of truth.

5.0 Important Quotes of Bacon:

- **Knowledge is power**
- **If a man will begin with certainties, he shall end in doubts, but if he will be content to begin with doubts, he shall end in certainties.**
- **Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man.**
- **Imagination was given to man to compensate him for what he is not; a sense of humour to console him for what he is.**
- **Wives are young men’s mistress, companions for middle age and old men’s nurses.**

(Other important prose writers of this age are James I for his Authorized version of Bible and Robert Burton for *Anatomy of Meloncholy*)

6.0 Poetry in Jacobean Age:

6.1 Metaphysical Poetry – The term ‘Metaphysical’ is loosely applied to a group of 17th century poets who did not belong to a school of poetry, but were united by “common characteristics of wit, inventiveness, and a love of elaborate stylistic manoeuvres” (Ian Ousby). Their poetry was rich in intellectual complexity.

William Drummond of Hawthornden coined the term metaphysical however, John Dryden was the first to use this term in his criticism of Donne. Dryden had stated that Donne in his poetry “affects the Metaphysics...in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts.” While Dryden had used the term in reference to Donne, Samuel Johnson extended it to a group of poets. In *The Lives of the Poets*, Johnson stated that about the beginning of the 17th century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets”. Both Dryden and Johnson had used the term ‘metaphysical’ in a negative sense to criticise the excesses of this group of poets. Johnson believed the metaphysical poets only wanted to ‘show their learning’. In their poetry “The most heterogenous ideas were yoked by violence together”.

6.2 Major Metaphysical Poets:

John Donne

Andrew Marvell

Henry Vaughan

George Herbert

Richard Crashaw

6.3 Common Features of Metaphysical Poetry:

- Metaphysical poetry is characterized by a subtle complex and concentrated thought.

- It is intellectually rigorous.
- It employs bold and ingenious conceits, also called metaphysical conceits. Johnson called it “A combination of dissimilar images” eg. in his poem A Valediction: forbidding Mourning, Donne compares the two lovers to a compass.
- It employs unusual images taken from different fields of knowledge history, geography, astronomy, alchemy, mathematics etc.
- It has a dramatic quality to it and often has an abrupt aggressive opening.
- It frequently makes use of paradox.